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THE MORAL OF WAR PICTURES.

MRS. M. E. BLAKE.

In a recent article upon the Verestchagin collection in a contemporary weekly the writer endeavors to point out some of the inconsistencies of the great Russian painter. It is far too late in the day to offer a critical estimate of an exhibition which has by this time run the gauntlet of opinion among its hundreds of thousands; but a word as to the moral value of its influence and a discussion of the vexing question it propounds can never be untimely. It is quite true that, considering only the war pictures and large canvases, Verestchagin has lost in artistic force what he has gained in sensationalism. To the trained imagination or the artistic temperament there is little more of feeling in his realism than in so much scene painting for the stage of a theatre. It is too evidently done for effect; and it succeeds in being repulsive without reaching the salutary inspiration of horror.

But it must be remembered, first, that it is not wholly to the cultivated sense of the art critic that Verestchagin makes appeal, and second, that his claim upon attention is not altogether dependent upon this class of picture. To the uneducated tastes there is a power in number and dimension. The sluggish imagination, which would look unmoved upon the pathetic dignity of death in the case of a single pallid face staring with awful eyes at the pitiless sky, will rouse at the sight of a thousand slain bodies, just as the vulgar appreciation which cares nothing for the sighing melody of the "Last Rose of Summer" will applaud with delight its strident shriek in a cornet solo or its ear-splitting volume in a jubilee chorus. And this portion of the world—which is unfortunately much larger than we would like to believe—carries away from these square feet of gruesomeness an abiding impression it would never receive from the same number of inches. No doubt the artist was sufficiently mundane to know this before he projected his moral object lessons.

THE SURGERY OF WAR.

It is not, however, for technicalities of criticism that one is led to notice the article in question, but for the evidently honest feeling of the writer that war is both necessary and salutary. "War is simply," he says, "the sharp and stern surgery of nations, by which it cut away some evil thing that, ignored and unmeddled with, would eat out the nation's life." "To great evils, great remedies; while sin exists, so will suffering; while the cancer, the scalpel; while wrong, war." If this be true, then surely the wisest as well as the noblest policy is to uphold the military spirit, to spur science to the search for more dangerous and swift instruments of warfare, to make the standing army the pride and glory of the nation. If the vindication of right, if the assuaging of evil, if the purifying of taint, is sure to follow the bullet and the sword, as healing does the surgeon's knife, then blessed be the blood-wet field and the burning roofs of happy homes and the heart-broken tears that rain above the beloved dead. But is it true? Even as the world stands to-day, chained by the old false traditions of glory, moved by the stubborn wills of ambitious men, greedy for power and pride instead of the loftier treasures of love and reason, does war right a wrong or bring about the just settlement of an injury? Has the result not been like that of a game of cards, without even the justice of equal

chances in the beginning; a conclusion to be reached by the strongest force in men and money? Did war, after its untold outlay of life and treasure, settle the difficulties in the Franco-Prussian struggle? Did it win for the right in the English quarrels with the African Zulu and Boer? Was it because of any intrinsic equity, or simply of longer purses and more available supplies that the war of the secession terminated in union rather than disruption? Is it ever possible to accomplish moral ends by the methods of materialism?—*Boston Journal*.

THE INTERPARLIAMENTARY CONFERENCE OF 1890.

A well-known essayist has said that if the question were submitted to-morrow to a plebiscite of Europe, universal disarmament would become a fact. Yet the potential fighting strength of Europe is somewhere about twenty-five millions. Twenty-five millions ready—on provocation more or less satisfactory—to blow each other into invisibility. But the population from which all these millions of fathers, brothers, husbands, are selected, hate the very notion of war, and would abolish the accursed thing to-morrow. Singular, is it not? There is no doubt whatever that the nations are sharpening their cutlery, and experimenting with their improved powders, and there is no doubt that they loathe the whole business. No Frenchman, unless he is a speculator or an ambitious officer, wants a quarrel with Germany. No German wants to fight France. The contradiction between preparation for war and detestation of it, is to be explained by the difference between a public opinion which has only begun to organize itself, and the traditional ideas entertained by the governing classes as to what constitutes national greatness. The question is how is this growing popular opinion on the evils of war to find its most effective expression. Obviously there can be no better way, at least at the present stage, than through the Parliamentary representatives of each state, in joint consultation. It would be all the better if these representatives were chosen formally by each Parliament in the name of the nation. But that stage has not been reached yet. The Parliamentary members who assembled at the Hotel Metropole, to hold the second European Conference on Arbitration, did not officially represent the various European legislative bodies to which they belong. But undoubtedly they represent a strongly growing opinion. The movement is making way, as shown by the fact that the number attending the Conference of 1890 was double the number which attended the first, held last year in Paris. Moreover, Mr. Philip Stanhore, speaking in the name of the Chairman, Lord Herschell, has announced that letters of approval had been received from one thousand legislative members who were unable to be present. We notice that Lord Herschell finds some ground for hope in the very horror of some of the new inventions for destruction. It is a perplexing situation at best. America is leading the way in this peace movement, yet America is busier with her naval preparations than any other Power.—*London News*.

United States Consul Ewing of Vancouver, B. C., declined to stand up and sing, "God save the Queen," "Long may she reign over us," etc. May be he couldn't stand; may be couldn't sing. Why "recall" him?